CLAIM AMENDMENTS:

1- 12 cancelled

13. (new) A plain bearing composite material comprising:

    a steel back layer;
    a carrier layer of bronze or brass which is cast, sintered or cladded onto said steel back layer; and
    a sliding layer sputtered onto said carrier layer, said sliding layer comprising AlSn(22-30)Cu(2.3-2.8), said sliding layer having a hardness between 110 and 150 HV 0.002.

14. (new) The plain bearing composite material of claim 13, further comprising up to 2 weight % of each of Ni, Si, and Mn, and impurity-related components of up to 0.5 weight % each, but in total not more than 1 weight %.

15. (new) The plain bearing composite material of claim 13, further comprising an intermediate layer disposed between said carrier layer and said sliding layer.

16. (new) The plain bearing composite material of claim 13, wherein said sliding layer is lead-free.

17. (new) The plain bearing composite material of claim 16, wherein the plain bearing composite material is lead-free.

18. (new) The plain bearing composite material of claim 13, wherein the plain bearing composite materials contains no antimony.

19. (new) The plain bearing composite material of claim 13, wherein a composition of said sliding layer is AlSn(22-28)Cu(2.3-2.8).

20. (new) The plain bearing composite material of claim 19, wherein a composition of said sliding layer is AlSn(23-28)Cu(2.3-2.8).

21. (new) The plain bearing composite material of claim 20, wherein a composition of said sliding layer is AlSn(23-27)Cu(2.4-2.7).

22. (new) The plain bearing composite material of claim 13, wherein said hardness of said sliding layer is 110 to 140 HV 0.002.

23. (new) The plain bearing composite material of claim 22, wherein said hardness of said sliding layer is 110 to 130 HV 0.002.

24. (new) The plain bearing composite material of claim 23, wherein said hardness of said sliding layer is 115 to 130 HV 0.002.

25. (new) The plain bearing composite material of claim 13, wherein said carrier layer is formed by a CuPb(8-25)Sn(2-12) alloy.

26. (new) The plain bearing composite material of claim 13, wherein said carrier layer is formed by a CuZn(20-32) alloy.

27. (new) The plain bearing element, a plain bearing shell for automotive applications, a crankshaft bearing shell, or a connecting rod bearing shell comprising the plain bearing composite material of claim 13.